



US Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine

25 February 2005

Health Information Operations Weekly Update



The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available from the [Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center](#). The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT TOPICS

Antibody Neutralizes Most HIV Strains

23 February – Medical News Today reported that a group of scientists has solved the structure of a rare human antibody that broadly neutralizes human immunodeficiency virus ([HIV](#)), which causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Neutralizing antibodies are soluble proteins that are secreted by adaptive immune cells into the bloodstream, following exposure to a virus. In the bloodstream, antibodies bind to viral particles in circulation, prevent them from infecting human cells, and lead to the viral particles' destruction - thus neutralizing them. Because neutralizing antibodies attack the virus before it enters cells, they can prevent HIV infection if they are present prior to exposure to the virus. An HIV vaccine would seek to elicit these neutralizing antibodies. The body makes many antibodies against HIV, but they are almost always unable to neutralize the virus. Nonetheless, the immune systems of some patients with HIV have beaten the odds and have produced effective neutralizing antibodies. The structure of one of these, called 4E10, neutralized nearly 100 different viral strains of HIV from all over the world. [View Article](#)

Cell Phones Can Help With Doctors' House Calls

23 February – [lol.co.za](#) reported that researchers in Switzerland found that cell phones could be used to help diagnose and suggest treatment for some serious wounds in patients in locations far removed from a doctor. The study looked at leg ulcers in 52 patients that were examined both in person and remotely by doctors in a nearby room who had only pictures of the same wounds taken by a first-generation camera cell phone. They found remarkably high agreement between doctors who looked at the wound in person and those who saw the image. "We were able to show for the first time that [telemedicine](#) for chronic wounds is feasible under routine conditions using this new generation of cell phones and direct transfer via email," the authors said. [View Article](#)

Genome of Amoeba Shows Complexity

23 February – EurekaAlert reported that the genome sequence of the parasitic amoeba *Entamoeba histolytica*, a leading cause of severe [diarrheal disease](#) in developing countries, includes an unexpectedly complex repertoire of sensory genes as well as a variety of bacterial-

[Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

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Eighth Annual Force Health Protection Conference

[Conference Home](#)

What is the Force Health Protection Conference?

The theme for the 2005 Conference is "**Force Health Protection – Future Force Enabler.**" Our conference mission is to advance technology, to better sustain the soldier in garrison or during deployments that may involve Weapons of Mass Destruction, to provide information of

like genes that contribute to the organism's unique biology. The *E. histolytica* genome sequence is expected to help in the development of new vaccines as well as diagnostic tests that can distinguish the amoeba's most deadly strains. The parasite infects an estimated 50 million people and causes as many as 100,000 deaths a year -- second only to malaria as a cause of morbidity and mortality from a protist. [View Article](#)

New Synthetic Paste Repairs Early Tooth Decay

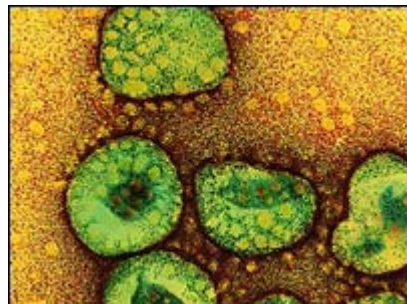
23 February – Reuters reported that researchers in Japan have developed a new synthetic tooth enamel that can repair early [tooth decay](#) without the need for drillings and fillings. The crystalline white paste can reconstruct enamel without removing the decayed area. It repairs small cavities and helps prevent new ones. Dentists usually treat cavities by removing the decayed area and filling the hole with a resin or metal alloy. But it is not ideal for small cavities because healthy tooth is also removed to make the filling stick. The scientists found the paste integrated with the tooth's natural enamel but warned the paste should not come into contact with the gums because it could cause inflammation due to its high concentration of hydrogen peroxide. [View Article](#)

Scientists Identify Stem Cell On/Off Switch

23 February – Forbes reported that the therapeutic promise of [stem cells](#) lies in the fact that they begin as undifferentiated cells, but can develop into any cell type in the body. Someday, doctors may be able to harness this process to grow replacement cells for patients who've lost tissues because of injury or disease. However, once a stem cell differentiates into a brain, heart, muscle or other body cell, there's no turning back. Now, in experiments with mice, scientists believe they've discovered a new class of gene signals that either prevent or permit stem cells to develop into specific cell types. That's important because to keep stem cells useful therapeutically, doctors will have to preserve them as undifferentiated stem cells for as long as possible. [View Article](#)

Threat of New SARS Outbreak 'Low'

20 February – BBC News reported that the world is unlikely to face an explosive [SARS](#) outbreak like the one of two years ago. The strain of the virus that jumped readily between humans probably only exists in lab samples. It would take an



benefit to first responders, and to bolster everyday response capabilities. Our primary focus is the soldier.

Who hosts the FHP Conference?

The Conference is hosted by the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, a subordinate command of the U.S. Army Medical Command.

Who should attend the FHP Conference?

Last year, over 1500 individuals attended the Force Health Protection Conference. We had over 90 exhibitors, more than 80 poster presentations, and over 400 technical presentations. We expect 2005 to be another exceptional year for the Force Health Protection Conference. Military, Veterans Administration professionals, DoD civilian professionals, and security professionals, and educators working in the areas of environmental health, occupational and preventive medicine, health promotion and

unhappy accident or a fresh mutation of the virus in an animal host for it to re-emerge and even if it did, it could be quickly contained. She said scientists had learned a great deal from the epidemic of SARS. "We now have wonderful, very sensitive diagnostic tests and new treatments to fight any outbreak. Scientists now know so much about SARS that this knowledge is helping them find and treat previously undiagnosed human diseases caused by other coronaviruses. [View Article](#)

wellness,
population
health, and
behavioral health
should plan to
attend this event.

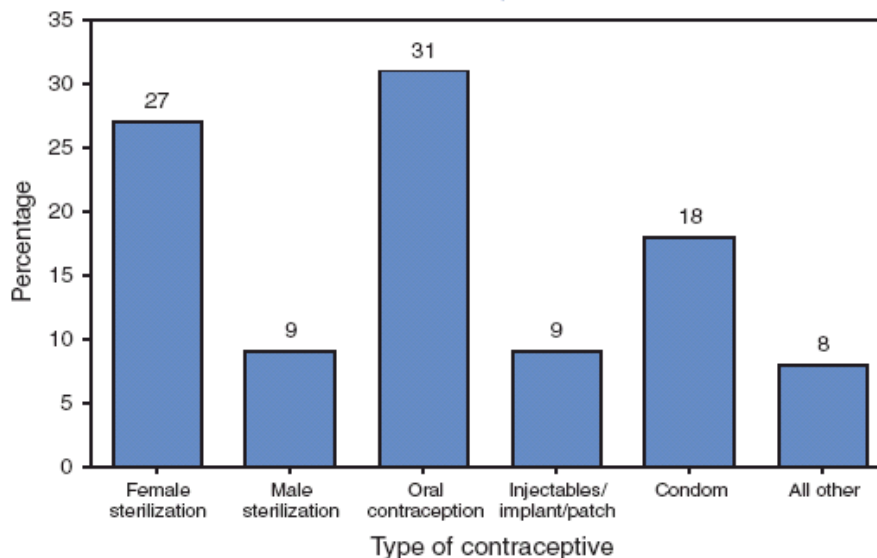
Focus on Epidemiology

Primary Contraceptive Methods among Women

QuickStats

FROM THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

Primary Contraceptive Methods Among Women Aged 15–44 Years — United States, 2002



18 February – MMWR reported that in 2002, the most frequent contraceptive method among women aged 15–44 years was oral contraception. Other leading methods were female sterilization and the male condom. A smaller, but significant, number of women were using the newer, long-acting hormonal methods, including injectables, implants, and the patch. [View Article](#)

DoD-GEIS: Avian Influenza (AI) A (H5N1)

24 February - Human cases of AI in Asia raise concern about potential human-to-human transmission; investigation continues. Dr. Julie

Gerberding said this week that AI is the most acute global emerging infectious threat the world faces right now. She said the H5N1 avian flu could trigger a human flu pandemic similar to the pandemic of 1918 that killed up to 100 million people worldwide and she warned that if a pandemic occurred, vaccine would be in short supply and would have to be rationed. She cited experts' opinion that the virus that sparked the 1918 pandemic probably originated in birds. The H5N1 virus, besides killing birds and poultry, has caused at least 55 reported human cases in Thailand and Vietnam, 42 of them fatal. The virus has not yet developed the capacity for efficient human-to-human transmission. She said that opportunities exist, given widespread circulation of H5N1 virus in Southeast Asian poultry, for either viral genetic re-assortment with human strains of influenza or with other avian strains. Dr. Gerberding said, "We are expecting more human cases over the next few weeks because this is high season for avian influenza in that part of the world. Our assessment is that this is a very high threat." Regarding vaccine she said that the US has contracted with Sanofi Aventis to make 2 million doses of a vaccine for the H5N1 virus, but the vaccine has not yet been tested in clinical trials; this contract would give vaccine manufacturers a head start if a pandemic began. The first doses to become available would be used in a ring vaccination strategy to try to stop the outbreak at its source; transmission of influenza can occur before infected people have any symptoms, so a strategy such as quarantine is not likely to be successful. Informative web sites include [CDC](#), [IOM](#) and [WHO](#). *Information on Influenza (avian and human) including the DoD Global Influenza Program, WNV, Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#).*

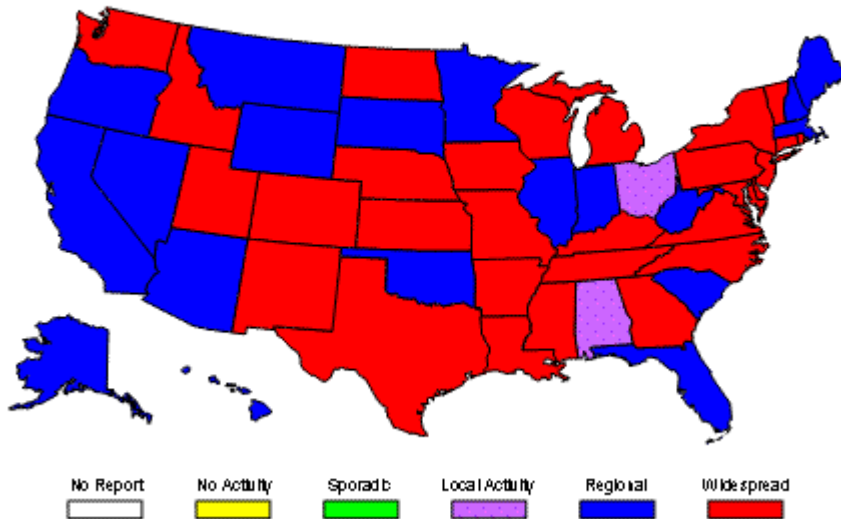
Influenza Update

[CDC Weekly Influenza Report for Week Ending 12 February – Week 6](#)

From 6 – 12 February 2005, influenza activity continued to increase in the United States. Nine hundred twelve (25.3%) specimens tested were positive for influenza viruses. The proportion of patient visits to sentinel providers for influenza-like illness (ILI) has been above the national baseline for 5 consecutive weeks. The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza is below the epidemic threshold. There have been six influenza-associated pediatric deaths reported to CDC this season.

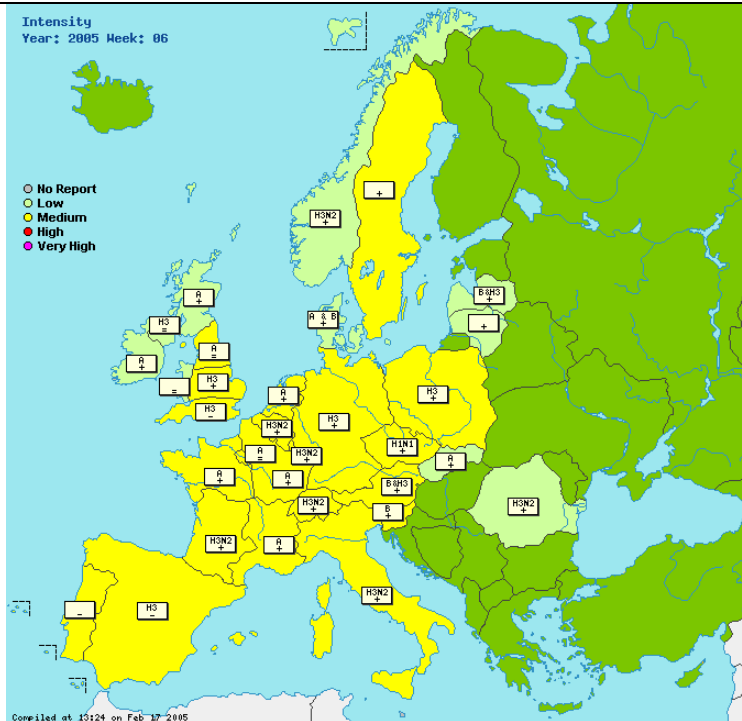
**Weekly Influenza Activity Estimates Reported
by State & Territorial Epidemiologists**

Week ending February 12, 2005 - Week 6



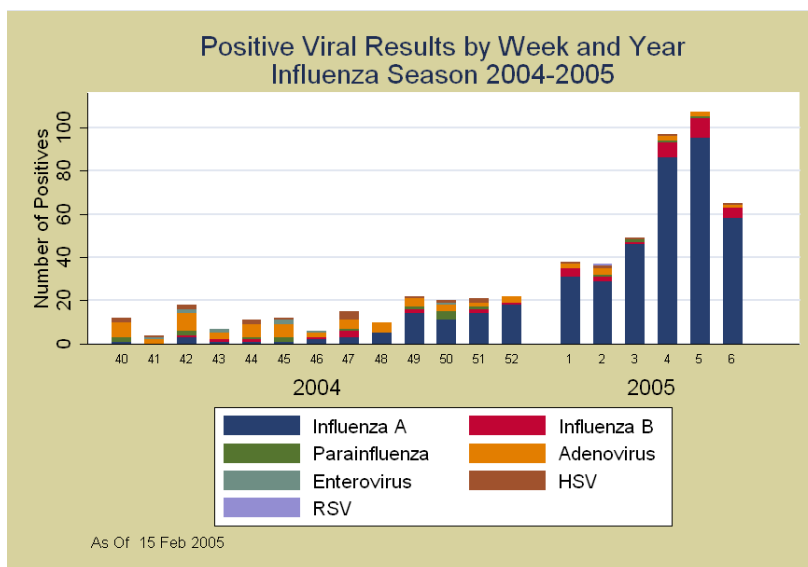
**European Influenza Surveillance Scheme Report for Week Ending 13
February – Week 6**

The majority of countries participating in EISS reported a medium intensity level of influenza activity in week 06/2005. Most countries also reported increasing clinical activity compared to week 05/2005, with particularly large increases observed in Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Switzerland. In Spain and Portugal, two countries that have already experienced their seasonal influenza activity, clinical and virological activity are decreasing. In general, children aged 0-4 and 5-14 are most affected by the influenza activity. The dominant virus in Europe is A(H3) and seasonal data show most of these to be A/Wellington/1/2004 (H3N2)-like viruses.



DOD Worldwide Influenza Surveillance Program for Week Ending 12 February – Week 6

Since 3 October 2004, the Epidemiological Surveillance Division (AFIOH/SDE) has processed 1503 specimens as part of the influenza surveillance program. Of those specimens, 419 (28%) were positive for influenza A and 40 (3%) were positive for influenza B. In addition, 289 specimens are still being processed.



Other timely information can be found in:

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Aid Group Fears Over 1,000 Afghan Child Deaths

17 February – Yahoo! News reported that more than 1,000 Afghan children may have died of cold-related illnesses in a snow-bound Afghan province. Sixteen villages in a single district of Ghor province this week recorded an average of five deaths of children under five in each. Catholic Relief Services feared the toll in Shahrak district could be far higher as most of its 250 villages could not be reached because routes were blocked by snow. Two other districts were also inaccessible by road. The government had so far confirmed 136 deaths, mostly of children, in four districts - Shahrak, Tulak, Sargar and Tuera. The deaths were caused by illnesses including [whooping cough](#) and [measles](#). Another 39 deaths have been reported in Herat province, bringing the number of fatalities attributed to cold weather throughout Afghanistan in the past month to more than 200. [View Article](#)



Pakistan Measles Outbreak Kills 19 as Flood Death Toll Reaches 550

16 February – Relief Web reported that as many as 19 people, including 15 children, have fallen victim to a [measles](#) epidemic in Pakistan's southwestern Pishin district, which has been cut off from the rest of the country by heavy snow and flooding. A senior district health officer, Dr. Jaffar Khan Kansi, said about 40,000 people from 66 villages were suffering from a severe shortage of potable water and wood for heating. Scarcity of food and drinking water was being reported in various parts of Balochistan, where flashfloods triggered by torrential rains claimed more than 200 lives and displaced 36,000 people. The fatality figures in more than a week torrential rains and flashflood-related incidences in Pakistan reached 550, with 232 confirmed deaths in Northwester Frontier Province (NWFP). [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

DRC Plague Outbreak Spreads

23 February – BBC News reported that an outbreak of [pneumonic plague](#) has spread to a second town, Buta, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Thousands have fled the remote diamond mining town of Zobia since the disease first emerged at the end of last year. At least 60 people have died so far. The plague affects victims' lungs and is fatal if left untreated. The outbreak began just four days after the diamond mine re-opened near Zobia, north of the country's biggest city, Kisangani. Those who have died are all diamond miners. Another 350 miners have been infected. A World Health Organisation (WHO) will focus on trying to trace the 2,000 who have left since the start of the outbreak. Pneumonic plague can be transmitted from person to person through respiratory droplets. [View Article](#)



Mozambique: Cholera Outbreak Confirmed in Sofala

22 February – All Africa reported that the health authorities in the central Mozambican province of Sofala diagnosed 19 new cases of [cholera](#). One case was diagnosed in Beira, while the others were all reported from Marromeu. "In Marromeu, the cholera outbreak was notified in the resettlement centre for the victims of floods in the last two years, in the locality of Nensa. We believe that poor supply of drinking water and poor individual and collective hygiene on the part of some of the residents may lie at the origin of the outbreak. So far, 18 cases have been diagnosed in Marromeu, 15 of them in Nensa, and the rest in Marromeu town", said the Provincial chief doctor. [View Article](#)

Russia: Rabies Widespread in Wildlife in Kurgan Region

22 February – ProMED reported that an emergency has been declared in the Kurgan region. Cases of [rabies](#) among animals have been recorded in all districts of the region. In January 2005 alone, more than 200 people bitten by sick animals have sought medical attention. This is 30 per cent more than 2004. The most distressing case was reported from the Makushinsk District. Doctors are disturbed by the fact that rabies has recently become more common in cats. Wild animals began to show disturbed behavior after summer forest fires, and hungry predators -- foxes and wolves -- in search of food began to enter human settlements, where they came into contact with domestic pets and transmitted rabies infection to them. [View Article](#)

Second German Death after Rabies Organ Transplants

21 February – Reuters reported that a second transplant patient in Germany believed to have contracted [rabies](#) after receiving an organ from an infected donor has died. The 70-year-old man had initially been brought into hospital about a week ago with suspected meningitis. On Saturday, a woman who received a lung from the same donor died. Authorities in Germany said they suspected three people may have been infected with rabies following transplants from a woman thought to have contracted the illness before her death. Doctors believe the donor, who died of heart failure in December 2004, may have contracted the virus during a holiday in India. She displayed no symptoms of rabies -- which can have an incubation period of several months -- before her death. [View Article](#)

Uganda: Anthrax Team Runs Broke

21 February – ProMED reported that while a fresh outbreak of [anthrax](#) is sweeping through parts of the Queen Elizabeth National Park, the team of experts set up last year to control it has run out of funds. Dr Nicholas Kauta, the commissioner in charge of livestock, said that the death toll had reached 37 since the year began. Kauta said they needed about UGX 200 million (USD 117,000) to bury the carcasses, vaccinate the livestock in the vicinity of the park, and increase public awareness. [View Article](#)

Uganda: Cholera Outbreak Hits Kasese

19 February – All Africa reported that about 46 persons were admitted to Kagando Hospital following a [cholera](#) outbreak. The Hospital Medical Superintendent said most cases were from Kiburara, Kisinga and other cotton growing areas of Lake Katwe sub-county and attributed the outbreak to lack of sanitary facilities and clean water in the affected areas. The district has had a series of cholera outbreaks with the most recent leaving about 300 affected and seven dead. [View Article](#)

UK: Sudan I Food Dye Deadline Passes

24 February – BBC News reported that the deadline has passed for food companies to identify any more products that may have been contaminated with a potentially cancer causing dye. The Food Standards Agency will publish a final list of products contaminated with [Sudan I dye](#) on Thursday afternoon. Shops and food outlets will be expected to clear any additional products from shelves and freezers. Local authorities will be carrying out checks and firms that do not comply could face fines. More than 400 products have been recalled so far after they were found to contain the dye. The dye has

been shown to cause cancer in laboratory animals - but the risk to consumers is extremely small. Premier Foods said it was "taking the matter very seriously" and was doing all it could to resolve the problem. [View Article](#)

UN Report Links Plague in Congo to Environment

21 February – VOA reported that the recent outbreak of [pneumonic plague](#) in the Democratic Republic of Congo could be linked to environmental conditions. This is one example of a growing link between environmental degradation and the rise in infectious diseases. The head of the environment and health unit at the United Nations Environment Program, Hiremagalur Gopalan, said exposure to mercury and overcrowded living conditions likely played a major role in the recent outbreak of pneumonic plague among miners in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He said. "There is mining activity. They're also exposed to mercury. Mercury is known to reduce the immune activity. And they also live close together. This pneumonic plague is [transmitted] through breathing, through aerosols. So it's possible that it is linked to the environment in which they live." The World Health Organization (WHO) said at least 61 miners in Ituri district had died of pneumonic plague. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Health Care Tab Ready to Explode

24 February - USA TODAY reported that the nation's tab for health care — already the highest per person in the industrialized world — could hit \$3.6 trillion by 2014, or nearly 19% of the entire U.S. economy, up from 15.4% now. Growth in health care spending will outpace economic growth through the next decade, and the government will pick up an increasing share of the tab. By 2014, the nation's spending for health care will equal \$11,045 for every man, woman and child, up from \$6,423 each this year. "We all know the current system is not sustainable: Health care cannot keep rising faster than gross domestic product," says Eugene Steuerle, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute. But, he says, the U.S. has been unwilling to embrace ways to control rising spending: limits on care and prices set by insurers or the government. [View Article](#)

Massachusetts: Woman Bitten by Rabid Coyote

22 February – ProMED reported that a man rescued his wife from a [rabid](#) coyote that attacked her in their back yard yesterday, clubbing it

with a piece of lumber. The woman was bitten on the left hand by a 45 pound female coyote as she tried to shoo it away from her dog. The dog was tethered to a run in the back yard of the residence. The victim was treated at Cape Cod Hospital and released before noon. Coyote sightings have become common throughout Massachusetts in recent years, coinciding with growing reports of disappearing cats, dogs, and, in at least one case, turkeys. [View Article](#)

North Carolina: No Connection in Flu-Like Army Deaths

18 February – RDU News 14 reported that state health officials said there appears to be no connection between the deaths of three soldiers who developed flu-like symptoms after returning from overseas deployments. Sergeants Clay Garton and Christopher Rogers, and Captain Gilbert Munoz died after returning to North Carolina. Garton was a flight medic at Fort Bragg who spent 16 months in Iraq and returned home in July. He got sick and died the week after Christmas. A preliminary autopsy report said Garton's liver and spleen were swollen. Munoz was a Special Forces soldier based at Bragg who was deployed to the Middle East and died from a bacterial infection after returning. Rogers, a reservist from Raleigh, went to Afghanistan and developed a 109-degree fever after returning home. [View Article](#)

Ohio Blames Groundwater for Lake Erie Island Outbreak

22 February – The Detroit Free Press reported that widespread [groundwater contamination](#) on a Lake Erie resort island was the likely source of illnesses that sickened hundreds last summer. The Ohio health department said several sources, including septic tanks, have tainted the South Bass Island's groundwater over a long period, and the contamination may have been worsened last summer because of a season of heavy rains. The outbreak of gastrointestinal illness sickened about 1,400 tourists and residents, ending the tourist season early for many businesses. The health department tested 79 wells throughout the island last September. About eight out of 10 tested positive for the bacteria coliform, which could signal the presence of other harmful bacteria. [View Article](#) [View Health Department Report](#)

USPACOM

Australia: Malaria Drug Gets Nod

22 February – The Townsville Bulletin reported that a new study of larium ([mefloquine](#)) trialled on soldiers deployed in East Timor during

2000-01 found most soldiers trialled with larium would be willing to use it again. The drug had earlier been blamed for psychotic behavior including violence, paranoia, murder and suicide. The authors said larium was generally tolerated by soldiers and should be used by those intolerant of the drug doxycycline. Almost 60 per cent of soldiers reported at least one adverse event; most commonly sleep disturbance, headache, tiredness and nausea. There were nine serious adverse events in the mefloquine arm of the study. An Australian Defence Force spokesman said, "The Army Malaria Institute continues to recommend doxycycline as the preferred frontline anti-malarial medication for the ADF," he said. "Mefloquine is only used on small numbers in the ADF when members are unable to tolerate doxycycline. [View Article](#)

Fighting the Flu



1 February – The New Yorker reported on the particularly virulent strain of [avian flu](#) that has recently caused deaths in Southeast Asia. It addresses the danger to humans, whether we're due for another pandemic, what can be done to stop the next big pandemic from starting, dealing with mobile populations, and global health. [View Article](#)

Indian Ocean Earthquake & Tsunami Emergency Update

23 February – The Pacific Disaster Management Information Network reported that the death toll from the tsunamis is now 295,000 with tens of thousands of people unaccounted for. World Health Organization (WHO) officials estimate up to five million people displaced and at risk and 500,000 people injured. There are scattered reports of diarrhea, malaria, dengue, measles, pneumonia and skin infections, but no disease outbreaks. WHO officials said that preventing a widespread measles outbreak in Aceh province remains a high priority, with water- and insect-borne diseases remaining a concern. "The only outbreak which we could be talking about is of the [measles](#) among some young children," WHO spokesperson Petra Heitkamp said. ([see article](#)). WHO reports no communicable disease outbreaks in Sri Lanka or Thailand. Food safety and health education are receiving greater attention. Safe disposal of medical waste is

becoming an issue in some areas ([see article](#)). A UN Environment Program report says drinking water sources may have been contaminated with salt water and sewage. Hazardous materials may have also seeped into the water supply. The study was carried out in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Maldives, Seychelles, Somalia and Yemen ([see article](#)). [View Report](#)

Japan Found Bird Flu in Flies from 2004 Outbreak

22 February – ABC News reported that Japanese researchers found flies infected with the [bird flu](#) virus after an outbreak among chickens in Japan last year, a finding that underscores the ability of the deadly virus to jump between species. Besides having killed dozens of humans and caused the cull of millions of wild and farmed birds across Asia, the H5N1 strain has been known to infect other species such as cats and leopards. While there was no risk of humans catching the bird flu virus from flies, the possibility that flies could spread the virus among birds could not be ruled out and they should be exterminated in any future bird flu outbreaks. Humans are normally only infected by contact with large concentrations of the bird flu virus and it is "scientifically impossible" for people to be infected by flies. [View Article](#)

Vietnam to Test Bird Flu Vaccine on Humans

18 February – VOA News reported that scientists in Vietnam will conduct human tests of a new vaccine against the deadly [bird flu](#) virus after tests in mice and chickens showed promise. Results from the early tests show good signs of immunization, and tests on monkeys are expected next week. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Thousands Sick In Chile Seafood Bacteria Outbreak

23 February – ProMED reported that more than 6000 people have fallen ill after eating raw or undercooked shellfish infected with a [virulent bacteria](#) related to cholera. Climate change and rising sea temperatures are being blamed for the outbreak. Chile has never seen anything like it, as 6300 people have fallen sick since the start of January 2005 after eating seafood such as oysters and clams. Consumers can still buy shellfish, but sales have plunged an estimated 80 per cent. [View Article](#)